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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/23/2019
TAGS: ASEC PGOV PHUM PINR PREL SL
SUBJECT: ACTING AF A/S CARTER MEETS WITH SIERRA LEONE
AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS THREATS AGAINST OUR COM

REF: A. FREETOWN B. 110 FREETOWN 109 C. FREETOWN 106
¶D. FREETOWN 99 E. FREETOWN 95

Classified By: Acting A/S Phillip Carter for Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶11. (C) Acting AF A/S Phillip Carter convoked a meeting with Sierra Leonean Ambassador Bockari Stevens on March 24 to discuss recent disquieting articles and threats of violence against U.S. Ambassador June Carter Perry. A/S noted that the viciousness of the attack on her is deeply disturbing and that Ambassador Perry's safety in country is of paramount importance and a GoSL responsibility. Ambassador Stevens affirmed that the GoSL shares the same concerns.

¶12. (C) During the meeting, A/S Carter clearly stated his concern over the threatening tone of media attacks that started with an internet blog. The blogs' comments quickly spread to local newspapers and portrayed the Ambassador in a negative light for her activities while attempting to help Sierra Leone work toward peace and security following two days of violence and made threats against her person. A/S stated that Ambassador Perry is in Sierra Leone to support its development, but also to further Washington's agenda. That agenda includes a strong interest in human rights and the rights of women and their ability to go about their daily tasks without the threat of bodily harm. Ambassador Stevens stated that he and President Koroma were in contact and that President Koroma had personally called Ambassador Perry to express his deep regrets for the attacks against a person of her stature and that there was no justification for such wrongdoing. According to Stevens, the person with the blog is not a member of APC and is a "nut on the internet" who does not represent the GoSL. A/S opined that a case of this type is better handled by publicly disavowing the blog writer as a spokesperson and member of APC. Stevens responded that APC was already doing that and the front page of today's newspaper will denounce such attacks.

¶13. (C) A/S noted that the key is for the GoSL to be open, transparent and above board and engage with its opposition so that all views are heard. If the GoSL is inclusive, reconciliation will be easier to obtain. Stevens emphatically stated that President Koroma is transparent and has done well in integrating the parties and that he talks regularly with leaders of the opposition.

¶14. (C) Stevens was strongly reminded that the protection of Ambassador Perry is the responsibility of GoSL and that the protection of all persons are provided for under the Vienna Convention. A/S noted that our two countries have a strong partnership and interface on a number of issues of importance to both such as narcotics, for example. He noted that a military company is scheduled for training by ECOWAS or EU and that this reflects support for GoSL and the people of Sierra Leone. A/S told Stevens that he looked forward to meeting him again in different circumstances.

CLINTON